

## The Empire and Christianity

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however, were not long in completing what he had begun.

We pass to the senate and the senatorial order, with their various degrees of dignity, which Constantine and those who came after him delighted to elaborate. Every member of the senate was naturally a member of the senatorial order, but it by no means followed that every member of the order had a seat in the senate. The new senate of Constantinople, like its prototype at Rome, had little or no political power. It merely registered the decrees of the Emperor, and its function seems to have been one principally of dignity and ceremony. Membership of the senatorial order was a social distinction that might be held by a man living in any part of the Empire and was gained by virtue of having held office. The order was an aristocracy of officials and ex-officials, distinguished by resplendent titles, involving additional burdens in the way of taxation—the price of added dignity. A few of these titles are worth brief consideration. To the Emperor there were reserved the grandiloquent names of Your Majesty, Your Eternity, Your Divinity. Members of the reigning house were Most Noble (*Nobilissimi*). To the members of the senate, including the officials of the very highest rank, viz., the consuls, proconsuls, and praefects, there was reserved the title of Most Distinguished (*Clarissimi*), while officers of lower rank, members of the senatorial order but not of the senate, were Most Perfect (*Perfectissimi*) and Egregious (*Egregii*), the former being of a higher class than the latter. Such was the order of precedence